



Ministry of
Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

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Please note: Due to declining readership, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture will discontinue the Farm and Food Report. The last report will be issued the week of June 23, 2008. Saskatchewan Agriculture would like to thank you for your interest and participation over the past years. For information on Saskatchewan Agriculture's programs, services and events, please visit www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca.

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Log Number: 08-25-109
Week of June 16, 2008

SHOW PROMOTES BEEF VERSATILITY AND AWARENESS

The Cattle Marketing Deductions Fund recently sponsored a special episode of the Wheatland Café television show to promote the versatility of beef and to raise awareness of issues faced by the industry.

All beef producers contribute two dollars per head to the Cattle Marketing Deductions Fund at the point of sale of an animal. The revenue is overseen by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, which appoints a committee of individuals and producer group representatives to administer the fund.

The main purpose of the fund is to promote beef. Groups can apply to the Cattle Marketing Deductions Fund to support research, educational and promotional projects. In addition, industry groups apply for core funding.

The television show sponsorship was a promotional activity, said Brian Ross, chair of *The Cattle Marketing Deductions Act* Advisory Committee. "We wanted to get involved with someone to promote some beef recipes to the consumer, show how simple they can be and how nutritious they are."

During the show, dietician Thomas Hamilton of Personal Best Nutrition recommended beef as an excellent source of high-quality protein, iron and vitamins B6 and B12. Jeff Fritzsche of Butcher Boy Meats provided an overview of the different cuts of steak and roast.

The beef industry hopes that consumers will realize how easy beef is to use in everyday cooking. Top sirloin was used in a beef vegetable turnover, round steak was used in a stir-fry and flank steak was marinated in beer and molasses for barbecuing.

The show's host, C.J. Katz, also visited Jack Hextall's Black Angus ranch, which is home to 250 head. The purpose of the visit, according to Ross, was to demonstrate the safety consciousness of beef producers by having Hextall explain the tagging system initiative of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, which is administered by the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency. Its purpose is to track animals from the herd of origin to the point of slaughter. Knowing where the animal has been is an important step the industry has taken to ensure the safety of Canadian beef.

Beyond the explanation of the identification system, the visit to the Hextall ranch served to develop a comfort level between producers and consumers. "The producers have families, too, and they feed their families their own home-raised beef," said Ross.

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"They're not going to sell anything to anyone else that they wouldn't eat themselves."

Familiarity poses a challenge for the beef industry that the Cattle Marketing Deductions Fund seeks to address. By way of example, Ross refers to the issue of environmental consciousness.

"Producers are very concerned about the environment that they live in. As we see it, the problem is that producers are getting further and further removed from urban people." In response, the Cattle Marketing Deductions Fund contributes to the Prairie Conservation Action Plan and the Agri-Ed Showcase at Canadian Western Agribition.

The sponsorship of the Wheatland Café was a positive move to help bridge that gap.

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WBDC CELEBRATES A DECADE AT FIELD DAY

The Western Beef Development Centre's (WBDC) annual summer field day is coming up on June 24 at the centre's Termuende Research Farm near Lanigan.

Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Bob Bjornrud will kick off the day with greetings, followed by a welcome from Dale Termunde, an Illinois-based lawyer whose aunt and uncle contributed the family farm for beef research.

The field day offers a variety of educational opportunities, including presentations, displays and tours of current beef and forage research projects and farm facilities.

"The farm tours are the big draw. I think people would like it if we did them all day, but we do some presenting, as well," joked event organizer Brenda Freistadt.

Anyone involved or interested in the beef industry will be able to find some benefit in the WBDC field day. Presentations and tours will cover the topics of forage and grasses, market conditions, the use of dried distillers grains and solids as a feed supplement, backgrounding cattle and the importance of colostrum. To add an international flavour to the event, Shannon Scott will give a presentation on grass-fed beef in Argentina.

One of the event's goals is to reach out to producers and the public in order to make people aware of the valuable research work conducted at the farm.

One such project is the WBDC's study of dried distillers grains and solids. The solids are primarily supplied to dairy cattle. However, the WBDC is studying their use as a feed supplement for beef cattle, particularly in conjunction with lower quality forages, to see how the protein benefits can be captured and how the animals respond. Graduate student Amanda Van de Kerkhove will report on the research during the field day.

During lunch, participants are encouraged to visit the booths of the sponsors, which will be set up both inside and outdoors.

In 2008, the WBDC marks its 10th anniversary. To help commemorate this milestone, the event sponsors have dug extra deep for the prize draws, and giveaways will be conducted throughout the day.

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The field day is a free event, with registration beginning at 9:30 a.m. on June 24. The only fee is the optional \$10 steak barbecue taking place at the end of the day, hosted by the Lanigan Fire Department.

Typically, between 150 and 200 people attend. However, the count has fluctuated as high as 300 in past years, according to Freistadt.

For more information on the WBDC field day, visit the centre's website at <http://www.wbdc.sk.ca/>, or contact Brenda Freistadt at (306) 682-3139, extension 246.

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NEW FORAGE YIELD PREDICTOR MODEL WARNS OF SHORTAGES

A new forage yield predictor model developed by the Western Beef Development Centre (WBDC) suggests that farmers in southeast and south-central Saskatchewan need to plan ahead to optimize the returns on their beef cattle.

The model predicts that hay yields will be down province-wide, with areas in the southern grain belt likely feeling the greatest effect.

"There really isn't another forage yield predictor model available, yet the information is extremely important for the cattle industry," said David Gullacher, CEO of the Prairie Agriculture Machinery Institute, which oversees the WBDC.

"We really need to get this information out to producers. We've got a situation in southeast and south-central Saskatchewan where we're going to have less than 50 per cent of normal hay, based on the weather we've had to date – and we can say that with a great deal of confidence."

The model, developed by Dr. Paul Jefferson, Vice President of the WBDC, takes into consideration the factors that account for 70 per cent of Saskatchewan's general forage yield decline. Key predictors include precipitation, temperature, beef herd size and fertilizer prices.

The effects of weather conditions are quite obvious, and the reason for the WBDC's low yield prediction stems from the lack of precipitation in many areas of the province.

Cattle herd size affects forage yield, since the larger the population, the more stress placed on hay supply.

Moreover, fertilizer costs have been increasing since 1992. "It has created a reluctance in producers to fertilize hay fields, because of the cost relative to the return," according to Jefferson.

Not all areas of the province are experiencing a drought. The northwest has received adequate precipitation, and producers likely will not have to adjust their traditional patterns. But producers living in the area extending from the southwest corner up toward Nipawin should expect lower hay yields and plan accordingly.

Producers need to start thinking about what they'll do if these predictions become reality, suggested

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Jefferson. "Are [they] going to collect straw chaff? Are [they] going to buy hay from Alberta? Are [they] going to bale straw this fall and mix in grain?" he asked.

"It's to create momentum for this idea that producers need to start thinking now about the winter feed requirements for 2008-09 for their beef cows. If they're in these low-yield regions, what are they going to do?"

Jefferson notes that planning is the most important action.

There are other steps producers can take to maximize financial return. Culling animals will reduce stress on feed supplies, and weaning calves early will decrease the cows' nutritional requirements over the longer term.

In addition, producers may also adapt their feeding practices through field-grazing, feeding crop residue and blending grain with baled straw in order to make winter rations for calves. Alternatively, many producers will have to buy hay and feed.

In the meantime, members of the beef industry will hope for rain and warm weather. Jefferson suggests, however, that planning according to known variables, such as the low precipitation levels to date, is a more sound investment.

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Log Number: 08-25-112

Week of June 16, 2008

FEEDLOT SCHOOL COMING UP, JULY 29 TO AUGUST 1

The Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association (SCFA) is holding the 12th annual Western Canada Feedlot Management School from July 29 to August 1, 2008, at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.

Susan Echlin, SCFA General Manager, invites beef producers who are interested in learning more about the cattle feeding industry to get away from their farms or ranches for a few days and come back to school. "This unique educational opportunity will provide producers with improved production practices and increased marketing knowledge," states Echlin.

The school is structured into two sections: the first two days of the course focus on the business and marketing aspects of the industry. The second half of the course deals with production-related practices. Following the always popular Feedlot Tour Day on day three, the final day focuses on health and nutrition of feeder cattle.

"While we encourage everyone to attend the entire course, we understand it is a busy time of the year and participants have the option of attending the session of their choice," indicates Echlin.

This course provides students with a good balance of classroom learning, presented by beef cattle researchers and industry personnel, and hands-on learning activities. Sessions on live animal evaluation and nutrition and health related problems will be held at the Beef Cattle Research Unit near the University of Saskatchewan.

"With only 40 seats available, this school fills up quickly each year. Don't miss the opportunity to participate in this quality learning event," emphasizes Echlin.

A brochure providing information on each session is available on SCFA's homepage at www.saskcattle.com.

For more information or to register for the school, contact the SCFA at 306-382-2333.

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TRICKLE IRRIGATION BOOSTS EFFICIENCY BENEFITS

Producers and engineers will have an opportunity to learn more about a very effective method for watering crops at the 2008 Trickle Irrigation Workshop, being held June 26 and 27 in Outlook.

The event is being presented by the Irrigation Crop Diversification Corporation (ICDC) and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.

"Trickle irrigation is an energy-efficient method of applying water to high-value crops," said Lana Shaw, Irrigation Agrologist. "It is considered low-energy because it doesn't require water to be sprayed at high pressure in order for it to be applied to the crop. Instead, it uses tubing equipped with emitters. It applies water to the root at low pressure."

Some of the benefits of trickle irrigation include water distribution efficiency and minimal nutrient loss due to reduced leaching.

The infrastructure required to install a trickle irrigation system includes a pump, filter, main lines, lateral lines and emitters. "The trickle tubes or tape are put in rows where the crop is taking up water. Sometimes they're buried below the surface, sometimes they're right on the surface," explained Shaw.

The keynote speaker for the two-day workshop is Ted van der Gulik, a senior engineer with the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. "Van der Gulik is probably the foremost expert on trickle irrigation in Western Canada," said Shaw. He is also the author of the *B.C. Trickle Irrigation Manual*, which will be used for the workshop.

"Some of the things people can expect to learn are different materials that can be used for trickle irrigation systems, designing a trickle irrigation system that's appropriate for a particular situation or crop, scheduling irrigation to optimize productivity, and issues around water quality, filtration and system maintenance," said Shaw. "They'll also learn general principles of trickle irrigation system design."

Other agenda highlights include fruit and vegetable demonstrations at the Canada-Saskatchewan Irrigation Diversification Centre and an agroforestry demonstration beside the Town of Outlook municipal lagoons.

Before hearing from Van der Gulik, representatives from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture will

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kick off the workshop. "We will be speaking about the irrigation development process, with particular reference to trickle irrigation," said Shaw.

Workshop organizers are expecting between 30 and 50 people. Shaw expects a good mix of producers and engineers that would be responsible for operating or designing irrigation systems.

Those interested in participating should contact Lana Shaw at (306) 867-5512.

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